

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 03792 261846Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 261724Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4303

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 3792

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS, PN, PFOR

SUBJECT: U.S. PANAMA TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: MINISTER NEGOTIATOR
TACK'S POSITION

REF: STATE 149106

SUMMARY: DURING LUNCHEON CONVERSATION JUNE 24, TACK TOLD EMBOFF THAT, DESPITE ALL RUMORS TO CONTRARY, HE REMAINS A CENTRAL FIGURE IN TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AND RECENT CHANGE WAS TO ENABLE HIM TO CONCENTRATE EXCLUSIVELY ON TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. HE ASKED THAT U.S. NEGOTIATORS BE INFORMED OF HIS SITUATION. HE STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING COMMUNICATION. HE AND HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATES APPEAR TO BELIEVE THAT LT. COLONEL MANUEL NORIEGA IS TRYING TO UNDERMINE HIS INFLUENCE. DESPITE TACK'S ASSURANCES, HIS SITUATION REMAINS UNCLEAR. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF WAS INVITED TO LUNCHEON JUNE 24 BY JORGE ILLUECA OSTENSIBLY TO MEET PANAMA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AT UN, AMBASSADOR AQUILINO BOYD. PRIOR TO LUNCHEON ILLUECA HAD SAID BOYD, TREATY ADVISER OMAN JAEN, AND PERHAPS "SOMEONE ELSE" WOULD BE PRESENT. THE "SOMEONE ELSE" WAS TACK.

2. DURING EXTENDED CONVERSATION TACK RAISED QUESTION OF HIS OFFICIAL STATUS TWICE SAYING THAT HE HAD BEEN RELIEVED OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES AS FOREIGN MINISTER SO HE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PANAMA 03792 261846Z

COULD CONCENTRATE FULL TIME ON THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. HE

AND OTHERS BELITTLED RUMORS THAT HE WAS BEING EASED OUT OF NEGOTIATING PICTURE. TACK EMPHASIZED THAT THERE WOULD BE CONTINUITY IN PANAMA'S NEGOTIATING SITUATION. HE ASKED THAT THE U.S. NEGOTIATORS BE INFORMED OF THIS AND STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING COMMUNICATION.

3. TACK, ILLUECA AND BOYD AT ONE POINT HAD A THREE-WAY EXCHANGE CONCERNING NATIONAL GUARD G-2 LT. COLONEL MANUEL NORIEGA. ALTHOUGH EMBOFF DID NOT CATCH FULL EXCHANGE, THEY WERE NOT REFERRING TO NORIEGA IN FAVORABLE MANNER. A SUBSEQUENT REMARK BY ILLUECA INDICATED HE BELIEVED NORIEGA WAS OUT TO GET TACK.

4. TACK TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE HOPED THAT TREATY WOULD BE READY FOR SIGNING THIS YEAR. HE INQUIRED CONCERNING AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S TRAVEL PLANS, AND SAID THE NEXT VISIT WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT. HE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THE JOINT U.S.-PANAMANIAN RESOLUTION AT THE OAS MEETING IN WASHINGTON, AND SAID AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S SPEECH IN SEATTLE HAD BEEN VERY HELPFUL IN SHOWING PANAMANIAN PUBLIC THAT THE U.S. EXECUTIVE IS NEGOTIATING IN GOOD FAITH. TACK HAD TALKED WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF U.S. PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS WHO OFFERED TO "SELL" PANAMA TO THE U.S. PUBLIC, BUT HE WAS NOT CONVINCED SUCH A CAMPAIGN WOULD BE WORTHWHILE.

5. COMMENT: TACK APPEARED VERY CORDIAL AND RELAXED. MUCH OF THE CONVERSATION CONSISTED OF JOKES AND ANECDOTES; HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT HE RAISED THE QUESTION OF HIS STATUS TWICE, PLUS THE NATURE OF THE REMARKS CONCERNING NORIEGA, INDICATES THAT HE IS CONCERNED. WHAT APPEARS TO BE GOING ON IS A PANAMANIAN FACTIONAL STRUGGLE IN WHICH TACK HAS LOST SOME GROUND BUT THE OUTCOME OF WHICH REMAINS UNDETERMINED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGREEMENTS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PANAMA03792
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750222-0469
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750613/aaaaalrs.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 75 STATE 149106
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 SEP 2003 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <09 OCT 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: U.S. PANAMA TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: MINISTER NEGOTIATOR TACK'S POSITION
TAGS: PFOR, PN, (TACK, JUAN ANTONIO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006